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Current Recordings

By Jacob Siskind

Piatigorsky disc worthy memorial

The recent passing of Gregor Piatigorsky removed from the musical scene one of the most delightful characters ever to grace it, as well as one of the finest, most thoughtful musicians ever to perform in public.

Piatigorsky was an enormous man with enormous appetites and a zest for living. He loved playing the cello but he hated having to play it in public, where his performances would be put under a microscope.

As soon as he was able, he retired from active concert-giving and spent most of his time sharing his musical insights with students who flocked to him from every part of the globe. They all enjoyed working with him as much as he enjoyed teaching.

In recent years he made few recordings. The record companies were not interested in his performances because he was not playing enough concerts in a year to keep his name before the public. Musicians knew about him but the general public is fickle.

Fortunately, he had the custom of playing chamber music with Jascha Heifetz, and some of their friends, and some of these concerts were recorded privately but professionally and some of these recording were issued by RCA.

Now however, Heifetz has switched from RCA to CBS (or Columbia as it is still known in some circles) and a recording featuring these two greats of yesteryear has just been issued by the latter company.

The first side of the record has Heifetz and Piatigorsky playing duets — their own transcription of Stravinsky's *Suite Italienne* (taken from *Pulcinella*), the Handel-Halvoren *Passacaglia* (originally for violin and viola) and a *Prelude* by Gliere.

The sounds these two men produce are simply extraordinary and if there are occasional fly-specks on the intonation or the ease with which they play, the musical impetus is so spontaneous and the taste so impeccable that the performances can only delight the intelligent listener. (Columbia M 33437).

The other side of the record has a performance of the Dvorak *Trio in f minor, Op. 65*, with Leonard Pennario at the piano. Unfortunately Pennario is simply not in the same class as the two string players and he lets his side down a bit; but it is so wonderful to have Heifetz and Piatigorsky's ideas about this marvellous score that I am almost willing to put up with the pianist.

For a more homogeneous performance try the one by the Beaux Arts Trio. But for exquisite string playing this version is unbeatable.

Grumiaux plays Tschaikowsky

Arthur Grumiaux has long been considered one of the major violinists before the public today.

His latest release is a coupling of the Tschaikowsky *Violin Concerto* with the *Serenade Melancholique, Op. 26*. He plays everything rather deliberately, never rushing for the sake of effect, but he also knows how to maintain tension even in a slow movement and he holds your interest from the very first note to the last.

This is no ordinary fiddler and I recommend his playing to any violinist or violin enthusiast. Unfortunately the accompaniments provided by Jan Krenz and the New Philharmonia lack the very tension that Grumiapx generates so readily. But the record (Philips 9500-086) is worth getting for his playing alone.

Music for horn and piano

Vladimir Ashkenazy has been so busy with the solo music for piano that he has, almost in desperation, turned to various forms of chamber music in order to keep his horizons from shrinking. He has done two piano music with a number of other pianists. He is recording a great deal of the violin sonata repertoire with Itzhak Perlman.

Now he has turned to the horn repertoire and with Barry Tuckwell he has recorded the Beethoven *Sonata in F, Op. 17*, the Schumann *Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70*, the Danzi *Sonata in E Flat* and the Saint-Saens *Romance, Op. 67*. The pieces are all fun music and the performances are absolutely first class. I wish only that Ashkenazy had been less reticent.

Unique wit further refined

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for the Gazette

Rock & Pop

by Juan Rodriguez

Diana Marcovitz last played here in her hometown a half dozen years ago at the Montreal Folk Workshop. One remembers her style as unique compared to the usual earnest or tremulous folksingers. She was awkward, plunking away pseudo-barrelhouse piano, but there was a directness abut her that was infectious.

Since those days, she's been playing the U.S. She is still struggling to make her niche — after two albums and numerous club and concert dates everything east of Chicago — but she is doing it in the bigtime and this has forced her to develop and refine her style. The development is reflected in her second album, entitled *Joie de Vivre!* which reveals a unique wit that could well blossom into full expression.

Joie de Vivre! comes across as a stage album rather than a sound-portrait, just like the days when she plunked away at the Folk Workshop. She reveals herself as a singer who wants to give people a show, and so she takes on various dramatis personae and interprets their feelings in song.

The characters are familiar: Esmereida Sunshine, an ex-flower child from suburbia, her mind simplified by too many drugs, singing *Colorado of My Mind*("Words cannot express my mental anguish, as I go rolling down the line..."); Cele Dubin, her mother; Desdemona Mendelbaum, the starlet who goes nowhere; and so on. She steps into their psyches so smoothly, with such cynical barbs, that Marcovitz opens up her own feelings and experiences and makes it all sound real.

Marcovitz now has a depth that enables her to make cogent comments on life through a cabaret approach that may be less flashy than Bette Midler's but may also be more expressive.

She describes her schtick as "madness with class," and it has clearly taken plenty of tough work to hone it. After she left Montreal, she landed up in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., where Bob Dylan, Don McLean and others started out. From there she moved to Philadelphia, where she played folk festivals, colleges, and clubs, eventually attracting the attention of John Hammond at Columbia (the same producer who put Dylan on record). Her first album, issued a couple of years ago, attracted favorable reviews but no sales. A year later she joined the Kama Sutra label, which has produced *Joie de Vivre!*, complete with high class session players like the Brecker Bros. and keyboardist Fred Thaler.

Her songs show thoughts on a variety contemporary social mores: *Pretty Young Boys*, about homosexuals ("Oh but not for me I wish I could be a pretty young boy. He'd make love to me."); *Drop Dead*, about the chronic complainer; and about love, with a sense of flux that suggests being in love without knowing what the word means anymore.

She's a flamboyant singer who makes up for a lack of range (in both voice and composition) with a person-to-person style. She is almost a raconteur, imitating those demons she's seen in front of her as well as within her. Once she becomes more refined (she could do with less of pronouncing one-syllable words as two), Diana Marcovitz should be able to combine her off-beat humor with a visual approach ideal for television or cabaret.

Who knows, perhaps she may turn out to be an ungossamered neurotic like Rhoda (Valerie Harper) on TV. Diana Marcovitz has the verve and drive to make her exaggerations of modern life seem as moving as life itself.

Current events programs gaining fast in TV ratings

Radio & TV

by Joan Irwin

We don't put much emphasis on ratings in this space, partly because they're of primary interest to salesmen and advertisers, and partly because they're useless as an indication of the real values of individual programs.

If we depended on ratings we'd have to believe that an entertainment series like *Sonny and Cher* is more important than a consumer information series like *Marketplace* simply because its audience is larger. In fact, there's no basis for comparison at all.

The area in which ratings are useful is in documenting trends in audience preference. There seems to be a trend developing now both here and in the U.S., and it's encouraging enough to pass on to you.

It looks as if the public is at last becoming interested in current affairs programming.

There were strong intimations of a growing concern with the real world when massive numbers of North Americans and others became passionate followers of the Watergate hearings a couple of years ago. Now the national Nielsen ratings in the U.S. for the first five weeks of the current TV season show the weekly CBS series *60 Minutes* in the top 30 programs for the first time ever.

In this country the national survey by the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) shows both CTV's *Maclear* and CBC-TV's *fifth estate* with over a million viewers each in a two-week survey conducted between Oct. 4 and 17.

Neither *Marketplace* nor *Ombudsman* had begun their CBC-TV season at that time, and the survey ended just before the new CTV news team of Lloyd Robertson and Harvey Kirck took to the air on Oct. 18.

There's an eight-week Nielsen survey going on right now in Canada covering October and November. When the results are tabulated we'll have some indication of how many Canadians watched the much-publicized news team during its debut week and how many of them were still watching the CTV national news by the end of this month.

Apart from the good news that current affairs series are gaining popularity, the top-rated shows both here and in the U.S. are a fairly predictable bunch.

Happy Days leads in both countries, followed here by *Bionic Woman* (4th in the U.S.), *$6 Million Man* (10th in the U.S.), *All In the Family* (7th), *M.A.S.H.* (5th), *Sonny and Cher* (below 40th in the U.S.), *Disney* (34th), *Donny and Marie* (below 40th), *NHLHockey*, *Rhoda* (39th), *Carol Burnett* (below 40th), *Emergency* (below 40th), *Front Page Challenge*, Gemini Man (below 40th and cancelled), and *Phyllis* (below 40th).

The second and third-ranked series in the U.S. are *Laverne and Shirley* and *Charlie's Angels*.

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Montreal is going to find itself within range of a new American educational TV station when WCFE Plattsburg (channel 57) goes on the air some time this winter.

The station will be part of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), established to serve upper New York State. Like Vermont ETV (channel 33) the new station will be affiliated with a nearby state university, so the daytime in-school schedules will be quite dissimilar.

There's a scarcity of information about WCFE and its program plans, but it's assumed that the new station will carry pretty much the same network programming we currently find on Vermont ETV though quite possibly on different days and at different times.

The new signal will be stronger than Vermont ETV's and should be available off-air to those with adequate UHF equipment. According to Cable TV, which serves most of the western part of the Montreal area, there is no plan to add the new station to cable service in the foreseeable future.

Cable TV plans at the moment include Vermont ETV in the basic cable service to which an additional converter service will be added in the New Year provided approval is received from the Quebec Public Service Board.

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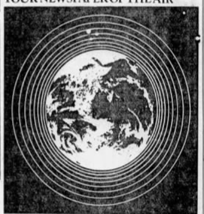

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